NATO OTAN NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Statement by NATO Defence Ministers

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1. We, the Allied Defence Ministers, met yesterday and today, halfway between the NATO Summits in Wales in 2014 and Warsaw in 2016, to review the implementation of key decisions taken in Wales and to direct further work. We noted the significant progress we have achieved, in particular in implementing the Readiness Action Plan.

2. We discussed the current security environment. Russia is challenging Euro-Atlantic security through military action, coercion and intimidation of its neighbours. We continue to be concerned about Russia's aggressive actions which we discussed also in a meeting with our Ukrainian colleague, Minister Poltorak, where we reaffirmed our strong commitment to an independent, peaceful and prosperous Ukraine and our firm support to its territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We are also concerned about the growing regional instability to our South caused by a combination of diverse challenges and threats, including the threat posed by ISIL/DAESH. To address all these challenges to the East and to the South, NATO continues to provide a 360 degree approach to deter threats and, if necessary, defend Allies against any adversary.

3. The Assurance Measures initiated in May last year continue to demonstrate NATO's collective solidarity and resolve. As part of the Readiness Action Plan, all Allies have contributed to this significant effort in the East of the Alliance on the ground, at sea and in the air, 28 for 28. We also discussed Adaptation Measures. Defensive in nature, they ensure that NATO has the right forces in the right place at the right time, and that NATO remains a ready, robust and responsive Alliance, capable of meeting current and future challenges from wherever they arise. We are working to ensure that our forces are fully trained, equipped and maintained at the high levels of readiness, coherence and flexibility needed to conduct NATO's full range of missions, including deterring aggression against Allies and demonstrating preparedness to defend NATO territory.

4. Work on an enhanced NATO Response Force (NRF) has progressed substantially. The future NRF will be significantly larger and more capable. It will be on a higher level of readiness, more responsive and more interoperable. The interim Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), led by Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, with other Allies participating, is now operational. NATO is engaged in a series of important exercises in the East of the Alliance, and we have noted with satisfaction the successful deployment Exercise NOBLE JUMP conducted by the interim VJTF in Poland last week.

5. From 2016, the VJTF brigade, led by Spain, with other Allies participating, will be available to respond rapidly to any contingency. This autumn, as part of its training and preparation, it will participate in NATO's high-visibility Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015 which will be conducted with over 30.000 troops mainly in Italy, Portugal and Spain. We welcome the declaration by Turkey to assume the role of framework nation for a future rotation of the VJTF, in addition to France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

6. The establishment of the first six multinational command and control elements – the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) – on the territories of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, is well under way. They will facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the region as required; support collective defence planning; and assist the coordination of multinational training and exercises. Taking into account military advice on the establishment of additional NFIUs which is currently being developed, we will take a decision at our meeting in October.

7. To enhance the ability to respond quickly and effectively to any contingency, we have significantly adapted our advance planning. We have also adapted our decision making procedures to enable the rapid deployment of our troops. We have set the key elements for an effective response to hybrid threats. We will seek close coordination and coherence with the European Union's efforts in this field. We have also agreed concrete steps for NATO's adaption to the growing challenges and threats emerging from the south.

8. The implementation of the Readiness Action Plan is contributing significantly to a substantial, far-reaching adaptation of NATO's military strategic posture required to respond to the changed security situation. We have issued new Political Guidance to our defence planners to maintain our ability to fulfil all three core tasks of the Alliance, with a renewed emphasis on deterrence and collective defence capabilities, and to maintain our ability to effectively deal with any future challenges.

9. We acknowledge that transformation of our forces and capabilities and the way we employ them require sufficient funding by all Allies. We reaffirm the importance of the Defence Investment Pledge adopted at the Wales Summit. Accordingly, we are working on reversing the trend of declining funding for defence, and we will make the most effective use of our defence budgets.

0. Our discussions have encompassed all of the important defence-related work that will form part of the substance of the NATO Summit in Warsaw next year, including elements of a comprehensive long-term adaptation of NATO. The progress made today shows that NATO has increased its readiness and responsiveness to all potential threats to the Alliance, and to any contingency that might arise.